

4th March 1925] [Mr. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar]

ask the Finance Member, and also the Revenue Member (who I observe is absent) to take into consideration the question of reinstating these village officers who have been thrown out of employ consequent upon the regrouping or amalgamation. It is left open to him to form a committee and by means of referendum ascertain the wishes of the people whether they will insist upon the old rate of pay or they would work as non-official workers. Opinion seems to be divided just now. After coming to the Council this morning, I received a letter from Villupuram wherein they say that, so far as monigars are concerned, they are prepared to take less pay provided their confreres who have been unceremoniously thrown out are restored to office.

"Coming to Excise, I wish to make a remark or two. It is rather in the nature of an anomaly that the Education Minister should be in charge of Excise as well. The only point of affinity between the two seems to be that both begin with the fifth letter of the alphabet, E (laughter). These two departments have different objectives which it is impossible to reconcile. So far as Excise is concerned, you raise money by taxing the vice of the people, but so far as Education is concerned, you spend the money to elevate the condition of the people and remove illiteracy. Under this system, the Education Minister is placed in an embarrassing position, and he finds himself between two stools. While his sympathy may be towards reducing consumption involving a fall in revenue and initiating a policy of temperance, when he sets his heart upon adumbrating a scheme of expansion of elementary education, he is confronted with want of funds and he necessarily feels obliged to give up the other thing. It seems to me, Sir, that the time has come, so far as this province is concerned, to inaugurate a steady policy of temperance with absolute and ultimate prohibition as the goal. I have no doubt that if that policy be kept in view, in the near future it will succeed. I am not unmindful of the fact when I make that statement that it is likely to bring about a considerable drop in the income, but the Government must be prepared to face this situation and any loss which

3-50 p.m.

this might bring about may be compensated by less expenditure partly under 'Jails' and partly under 'Police'. I make this statement advisedly for, a fortnight ago, I heard when I was sitting in the court of sessions, an approver getting into the box and telling us that they organized a large party and helped themselves with arrack some 12 hours before that party about 20 strong set out on the expedition of looting and committing dacoity. That shows that people help themselves very largely with drink for the purpose of easing others of their property by using violence or by means of intimidation. At any cost, this moral degradation of the people must be wiped off. At any cost, national honour and national manhood must be maintained. While I am on this, I am tempted to quote the report of a speech said to have been made by the hon. the Minister for Education at Bellare. That speech does not show that he is very much for the elimination of the excise revenue. For, I find there a struggle between his head and heart. That is the interpretation which I am constrained to put upon that. This is what the report says. 'While advance in excise policy is necessary, he (the hon. the Minister) asked them (the audience) to consider whether it was desirable to accelerate the reform in a manner that would completely dislocate the finances of the province.' I say, this excise dislocates the human frame, the frame of the nation. That does not trouble him. He is more troubled by



[Mr. J. A. Saldanha]

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was not aware that our town is infested with lepers. Anybody who passes over our roads, if he has eyes to see and observe things with, can easily know the fact. What is the use of replying that the Government have no information on such a vitally important matter as that? We now find a lot of people busying themselves about the question of leprosy because the Viceroy and other big people have moved in the matter. Why could not Government get at it before? Any local officer, the Collector or the chairman of the municipality, could have easily given the information. It is all very well to dance about, now that the Viceroy and others are moving in the matter, but it was then *suo motu* really a question of doing something humanitarian to the people, but in this cause the Ministers were nowhere and did nothing.

"Another point I want to touch is on the lying-in hospital at Mangalore. It is such a disgrace to the Government and the public that I think the hon. the Chief Minister should have known it two years ago when he visited that institution. I have seen with my own eyes 11 or 12 women in the maternity ward, which is not more than 12 by 20 feet. In this, these women were huddled together in the most miserable condition. And I am told that sometimes it is even worse, and if the hon. the Minister did come to know of it, I am sure he should have done something. We in Mangalore have now collected about Rs. 20,000 and applied for some provision being made. I find nothing in the budget which shows an attempt at least to meet us half-way and give us something so that we can start the hospital at once. It is so very badly needed and I want to know what the Government is going to do in this matter, in the way of giving us something. We have got only about Rs. 20,000 and we want something more to begin the work at once.

"The Indian Lepers Act was passed in the year 1898 and as yet Government have taken no measures whatever for the last 20 years to provide us with any large hospital or give adequate aid to the existing leper asylums in Mangalore and elsewhere. Now at last comes the big scheme of a leper colony at Chingleput which has been pitched upon us without taking the public into confidence and ascertaining the general opinion whether a large leper colony at a cost of several lakhs of rupees in Chingleput district would satisfy the needs and conveniences of the whole Presidency. Every leper would naturally wish to remain in a place near his own and among people talking the same language as he does, and do you expect that people from Malabar or Kanara would willingly go all the way to the Chingleput district for being properly housed, treated and taken care of? Apart from that, the question is whether Government is now entrusting the work to a society which would economically carry out the functions of a leper asylum. Dealing with lepers is a thing of a very difficult nature, and among us, Roman Catholics, we have got religious orders several centuries old who have been dealing with this question, who have been looking after lepers as a labour of love, who have given up the world and whose one object in life is the care of the sick even at the risk and sacrifice of their lives. Men and women like Father Daniel have contracted leprosy in order to save lepers and have died as lepers. Such religious persons can do useful work. As a matter of fact we find at Chingleput an arrangement was arrived at with a religious order in the year 1913, and we have not heard much of it afterwards. Now at last, as a very big scheme is started from big quarters,